



ASHEVILLE TRANSIT COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes

HR Training Room - 6th Floor City Hall

July 3, 2012

3:30 PM - 5:30 PM

RIDE.RELAX.CONNECT

Attending:

Commission Members: Julie Mayfield, Dave Erb, Paul Van Heden, Kevin Jenkins,

Council Liaison: Gordon Smith

Staff: Mariate Echeverry, Norman Schenck, Martha McGlohon, Janet GeorgeMurr, Nathan Gower

Community members: Janette King, Timothy Sadler, Jeanie Rosenthal, Darlene Hamilton

3:30 pm:

- ☐ Julie Mayfield, Chairman, opened the meeting and welcomed everyone;
- ☐ Paul Van Heden read the Announcement to the Public;
- ☐ Introductions from the Transit Commission, staff and public.

- **July 3, 2012 Agenda review and approval:** Approved as written

- **June 5, 2011 Transit Commission Minutes Approval:** Dave Erb moved to approved the minutes as written, Paul Van Heden seconded the motion, and carried unanimously.

- **Public Comment I:**

- ☐ Darlene Hamilton: Darlene lives and represents the Emma Community and rides the Crosstown route (Route C). She is requesting to have Route C reviewed as soon as possible. The most important issue is to have the bus route arrive at the ART Station. The riders are having difficulty in crossing Patton Avenue, N Louisiana Avenue since there are no crosswalks or cross signs which creates a dangerous situation. A number of people from the community state that the new schedule is too complicated, frustrating and needs to be simplified. Darlene stated that the transit system should want to invite people to ride the bus not discourage them. Darlene offered to work with the TC to be a positive part of making the changes. The new Route C has taken away riders independence.
- ☐ Janette King: Lives at the end of Montford, a single parent and works for numerous temp agencies. Ms. King's availability to work has diminished drastically since the buses no longer run early in the morning and late in the evenings. Ms. King is receiving fewer calls from the temp agency, which means less income. She was content to the previous route before 5/21/12 launch. Ms. King continued to say that there are good and bad things about the new N schedule. Ms. King is no longer able to enjoy the downtown area with her children due to early cut offs of new bus schedule times. Ms. King stated that she is just one of many whose lives are been ruined because of the change on the N route.
- ☐ Julie stated that TC is actively seeking feedback and appreciates the public for their comments.

- **Transit Commission Members' Experience on ATS this past month:**

- ☐ Paul - about 2 weeks ago in downtown on a Friday there was a bus parked on corner of Rankin Avenue and College Street. Paul walked up to the driver to ask if anything was wrong with the bus. The driver did not respond and the bus sat for a long time. Paul will email Norman the exact times, dates and route of this issue. Other than that the bus ride was fine.
- ☐ Julie - shared two experiences: 1. Julie was delighted to see more kids on the buses. 2. On W1 at 6pm, early in June on the day of the celebration at Clingman Circle, the police blocked off Clingman which brought confusion and the bus driver was very good in communicating to the dispatch which ended with an APD escort. However, the driver did not communicate to the riders why there was delay and the riders were getting frustrated. Julie's stated that people's anxiety reduces significantly when they are updated.
- ☐ Dave - N1 and N2 was a bit late, but generally on time.
- ☐ Kevin - S4 was late and missed the connection to come to the Transit Commission. Kevin decided to take the earlier bus anticipating that the later bus will be late that he would miss attending the TC meeting.

NEW BUSINESS:

- **Replacing Kevin on the CTAB Committee** - Kevin stated that he had been going out of town for the middle of the month, but he doesn't think this is happening any longer, therefore, he feels that he can continue on the CTAB Committee.
 - ❑ The CTAB Committee that Mountain Mobility is required to have in order to run the Medicare/Medicaid. There are number of agencies that are part of the CTAB Committee, i.e. Industries for the Blind, Disability Partners, several para-transportation agencies, the City, etc.
 - ❑ Mariate will inform Mountain Mobility to add Kevin to the CTAB mailing list each month along with the agenda.
- **Ideas for strategic planning session in September 26, 2012 (Retreat):**
 - ❑ Julie stated that she and Mariate will work on the agenda with a facilitator.
 - ❑ Julie asked TC of agenda items.
 - ❑ Julie stated that some of the items could include:
 - Progress of the goals from last year (2011-12);
 - Goals for next year (2012-2013);
 - Extend conversation on funding for C route (2 buses); N (2 buses). Julie stated to have this conversation and it seems to talk about the next priorities in implementing. This will focus in on the next set priorities; here how much it is going to cost in implementing the master plan. Mariate and Julie talk of this briefly and she agrees that this would be a good topic conversation.
 - Dave would like to see a thorough debriefing of the initial roll out.
 - Kevin - stated that he was speaking with the bus driver stated that N loop has a tendency to run hot b/c so few people so few people are taking the route. The driver was having difficulty b/c it does not go to the ART Station to take a break.
 - Gordon - to build financial partnerships with the businesses through out the town.
 - Paul - integrating art into public transportation. Julie suggested to have this agenda at one of the TC meetings rather at the strategic session (retreat)
 - Julie - funding options (from list of TC Goals)
 - Strengthen Communication with the Bus Drivers (from 7/3 minutes)
- **Media response to roll out:** Julie stated that in the last month since the roll out, there have not been very complimentary editorials, articles, cartoons in Asheville Citizens Times and Mountain Express. Julie stated that some riders that she had spoken with stated that the new transit system works much better than the old one system. There is also another side to what is appearing in the press at this time and Julie would like to have a conversation with TC on how to get the other voices out or do we just leave it.

Dave stated that he nearly wrote a rebuttal letter to one of the articles. Dave feels that the staff deserves a lot of pats on the back for managing a very complex system with no extra budget and getting as much extra good with as little extra bad as was received. Dave would like TC permission to write an opinion piece about the article. Julie stated that not hearing an objection from TC Dave will compose a first draft and send to the commissioners for edits. Dave will circulate a final draft of the letter before sending to the media.

Topics:

- ❑ Success of a complicated roll-out;
- ❑ Acknowledgement that the system is more problematic for some people;
- ❑ The acknowledgement that the system is much better for some people;
- ❑ First step in a much larger plan and to get there and to provide the service that we all want to provide to the City is a matter of resources.

OLD BUSINESS:

- **Transit Commission Goals Update:** Julie reported:
 - ❑ 1. Funding-Tasks: Completion of "White Paper" on funding option is not yet complete. The goal is to have it completed for the Strategic Planning Session (Retreat) in September.
 - ❑ 2. Public Relations and the Implementation of the Transit Master Plan: Julie stated that a number of the tasks are completed and there are some are in progress.
 - ❑ 3. Strengthen Communication with Drivers: Julie stated that under 4th bullet point:

○ Begin to building communication links: add this as a goal for next year. Mariate requested to Norman and Operations that the bus drivers meet with Transportation this month on Thursday 7/26. Mariate wants to hear the bus drivers' experience driving the routes.

- Julie asked if this could be a mandatory meeting. Norman stated this can be a mandatory meeting and there will schedule coverage for the drivers to attend the meeting.

- Norman stated that he has received comments/feedback from certain drivers and Transit was able to make bus stop corrections.

- Julie stated that to use the time efficiently at the meeting on Thursday, 7/26, Julie asked if Norman could collect in writing the drivers' input before the meeting.

- **STRIVE NOT TO DRIVE (SNTD) UPDATE:**

○ Julie stated that the pledges increased 50% from last year of over 300 people participation; and close to doubling the workplace challenge participation. Most people pledged because of their participation in the workplace challenge. This is an indicator that this challenge is a "feeder program" into SNTD. Julie stated that next year, SNTD will be even more "robust" and to pull in more participation.

○ Under the SNTD data, Mariate stated the report is in the TC packet of information. Mariate stated that compared to 2011 there was 18% less riders on the bus during SNTD week from Monday through Friday. This percentage could be due to the route and fare changes which is always an impact on ridership. The chart reflects of the SNTD Week, the pre-launch week and the launch week, a difference of 3%. There are a number of reasons associated, such as people are afraid of the change, do not understand the change, the changes are more difficult and a number of other factors that riders to decide not ride the bus.

STAFF UPDATES:

- **Transit Master Plan Implementation - Phase I Update:** Mariate stated that the comment cards and ridership were reviewed. Mariate introduced Nathan Gower, intern from Warren Wilson College, who entered the comments in a chart which is in the TC packet of information.

Nathan explained the methodology:

- ❑ There were 704 comments from 4 temporary workers, IRIDE, the comment logs, Yuri's data and varies staff members and translated them due to poor grammar and spelling which was difficult to discern the nature of the inquiry.
- ❑ There are 7 categories: Travel and Scheduling Inquiry - How to use the fixed route system and how to get to point A to point B; Transfer Inquiries; Stop Inquires (bus shelters, bus maintenance, benches);
- ❑ Driver\ /Passenger Complaints or praise;
- ❑ On-Time Performance;
- ❑ Disability;
- ❑ Other in which Nathan was not able to determine what category.
- ❑ Placed the comments in Positive or Negative columns. The comments were from 5/21 until 6/27. Nathan organized a chart of total number of comments per route.
- ❑ Julie asked how accurate is the chart in understanding where we need to focus efforts on fixing some of the problems. Mariate stated that the comment chart is useful for the staff to review and that the most comments that were received was on Route C. Most of the comments are not related to transfers, but only for inquiries as to where the bus is at that time. It is logical to receive a lot of comments for Route C due to a new route and people needing to know what to do.
- ❑ E1 which confirms staffs' thoughts about where there could be improvements. E1 has a problem with being on time due to the route being so crowded which is very difficult to have on-time performance. When Mariate read the comments some were very specific, but there some comments that are very vague or repetitive. Mariate stated that the list will be updated monthly and available for Transit Commission meetings. Mariate stated that the disability complaints based on making the eligibility process simpler. There have been meetings with Mountain Mobility to ensure that the staff is trained properly in paratransit and medicaid/medical trips.
- ❑ Julie suggested another category for triaging for the first category, Travel and Scheduling Inquiries. Riders might have complaints about the time of bus, the frequency of the bus. Mariate stated that this is on the On-Time Performance which includes transfers.
- ❑ Mariate stated that this is the most objective way to translate the comments.

- Julie stated that she had heard of more than 11 complaints than the data shows. Transfer difficulty on Routes C and N and Julie feels that the data does not tell the full story. Julie asks what is next.
- Mariate stated that looking at the comments and looking at what has been observed from operations there are several routes that are being watch very closely. Route C - that part of C route works very well and have transfers every single trip in a reasonable period of time.
- East end there is only 1 bus for transfer which is very challenging. Staff is trying to find a way to balance the transfers to improve E1 knowing that it will affect the transfers to the other routes. Also looking at E1 has a challenging time on-time performance; operations reported several times it is due to the overcrowding of the bus.
- Norman has been researching this possibility of leasing a 35 foot bus which will help expedite the boarding and de-boarding.
- Due to the VA reconstructing the new front entrance, Yuri is now working with VA to make a U-turn on the VA property. People will need to walk to and from the entrance of the VA, but it will keep the bus on-time.
- E1 - Removing one of the two out-bounds on E1 to Bleachery Rd. where Walmart and Kohls are located to control what is happening to the on-time performance for E1 without affecting the original plan.
- E2 - has had several locations of being late and a long route. The only place to cut time for E2 is removing the bus to Bell Rd to Evergreen and goes to Bethesda.
- S4 - on time performance. There are some bus drivers are able to keep the bus on time. There will be driver training and looking into increasing S4 to 5 minutes which is paired with W3.
- Gordon - Since the City will be receiving new buses this year, Gordon asked what happens to the old buses and is there a reasonable life span. Mariate stated that the old buses are auctioned. Gordon stated that is becoming clear that an extra bus is needed he will be argue to Council for funding, Mariate stated that many of these issues can be resolve with more buses. For instance, with Route C with an extra bus to go in the opposite direction, the transfer will go perfectly as well as with Route N. And, E1 would not be overcrowded with another bus. With the extra bus on E1 will help with the transfers on Route C. As with the other routes that have two buses in each of the routes, the transfers running very smoothly.
- Gordon stated that as Transit is preparing an analysis of the roll-out and what has been illuminated in the time since then, if Transit could provide a range of options for addressing those problems to include using current fleet and anything else that could be identified. If approved by TC for Transit to provide an array of options to carry to Council,
- Julie - what are the next steps: An array of costs and solutions?
- Mariate stated that there some changes that will not cost anything, i.e. changes to the E1.
- Mariate stated that Transit will be looking into Route C possibilities and will report back to TC as to a better service for Route C.
- Julie stated that TC will have a report for August Meeting. Julie asked if there was anything that can be changed before next month?
- Mariate stated if Transit can move fast enough that Yuri is talking with the VA people and need to install a bus stop in the VA property. Julie asked if TC could be helpful to Mariate in this process. Mariate stated that TC is welcome to participate in the process.
- Gordon asked about the price for a used bus when it is auctioned. Mariate stated about \$5,000. Mariate stated that if the buses are sold there could be enough money for the local match to purchase another bus. Mariate continued to say that it is very costly to maintain the old buses for new transmissions, engines, etc. It does not make sense to continue to repair, but could keep a bus as a contingency. All of the 1996 and 2006 buses are manufactured by Orion Manufacturer, who is closing their doors. By law Orion Manufacturer has to keep the inventory and the parts, but the pricing could be higher.
- Mariate stated when the 7 buses go to auction and the possibility of getting at least \$5,000 per bus, there would be enough funds to pay for a local match for a new bus.
- Mariate stated that there are used buses that can be purchased and used for 5 or more years and the only cost that the City would pay is the local share because the buses were paid by the FTA and NCDOT. The buses that Norman has been looking into cost about \$12,000 each to last 5 to 6 years.
- Julie mentioned that she had spoken with two friends in the last weeks who ride the W2 are reporting frequently late in the mornings by 9am. Norman stated that it is the morning traffic on Brevard Road.

● **Status of RFPs:**

- Transit Operations Roof - Two weeks ago there was a big storm the same day the roof was removed and the garage flooded. Norman and staff worked very fast with Building Safety and Risk Management. The damages are still being evaluated and Carolina Mountain Roofing insurance will pay for the damages.

- AVL - Automated Vehicle Location System was confirmed that COA has \$450,000. Transit will go to Council at the end of July for a budget amendment. This system will be able to track the buses in real time and will be implemented in 48 months. The RFP will be quick, but the implementation phase will take a long time to preliminary work. COA is receiving enough money to install a large screen at the ART Station showing when the next bus is coming. We are looking into LED signs for some of the transfer places; and to install shelters on Route C; and to have the LED signs showing the arrival of the buses. Also the text messaging ability on the SmartPhone. On the new bus signs that are being installed - there will be a QR Code number for the phones to determine the next bus. Also, a great tool options because riders can track where the buses are and track on time performance on every trip.

- **Review of ART monthly reports:**

- Mariate stated that on the ridership stats for Route C - even with the challenges, the report still shows good ridership and drivers are surprised. This is a completely new route that has challenges but still shows good ridership.
- Julie asked about the ridership on Route N - Mariate stated that Route N is combining Routes 11 (the portion to Klondike) and Route 5. Route 5 was a low ridership and on Route 11, the portion that goes to Montford does not have the high ridership. The main ridership on route 11 was Hillcrest Apts; and the report shows on N3 there were 2,800; and few complaints which is a short trip of 10 minutes. E1 is the best performer of 6,300 ridership followed by W1.
- Mariate stated that the report for the Fare Free Weeks is a long report that shows the numbers from May and June, but the numbers from June are not audited, but the ridership still looks good. The highest ridership was from the last week of the Fare Free.
- Question from Julie regarding the budget for funding for holiday service. Gordon stated that there will be limited holiday service next year. Each means main corridors, limited hours of 8 hours; and cost to City around \$30,000.
- The holiday service will have the same limited routes and would run about \$190,000. Norman and Mariate will need to work on this because the Union will need to be involved in this change, perhaps by October, 2012. Norman stated that it takes approximately 8 weeks to make a change to the driver schedules because they have the right by seniority to pick the extra hours. There are a limited number of part-timers that could do that work. Mariate explained that CIP (Capital Improvement Project) will roll-over into the next year. Julie asked what was asked for the new budget in terms of Capital:
 - Maintenance to the ART Station for ADA improvements, painting and a whole list of items.
 - Gordon stated that Transportation attended the Housing Community Development Committee seeking community development block funds for a Transit hub in the Biltmore Village. Mariate stated that Transportation was rejected. Gordon stated that the presentation based on the feedback but also a lot of things take a few rounds before it gets funded and it is good to get in the pipeline.
 - Julie stated that the accident summary for May and June was only 4 accidents which is astounding for rolling out and the launch of the new routes.

- **PUBLIC COMMENT II: None**

- **ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

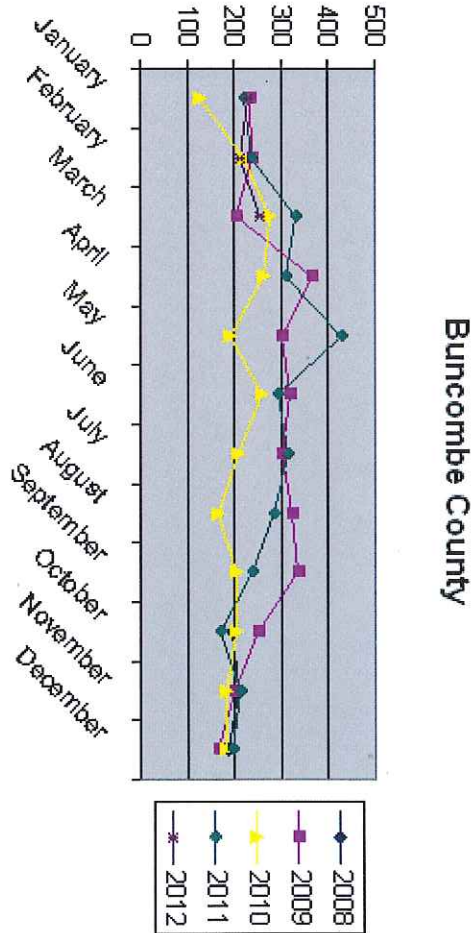
- Norman stated that Transit is now accepting credit cards over \$10.00 for a monthly pass on a debit or credit cards.
- Mariate stated that decals will be wrapped on the old buses to bring the bus fleet to conform to the new branding.
- Mariate announced that she will be on vacation next month (August) and that Yuri and Ken P will be attending the TC meeting/

- **Agenda Items for next meeting:**

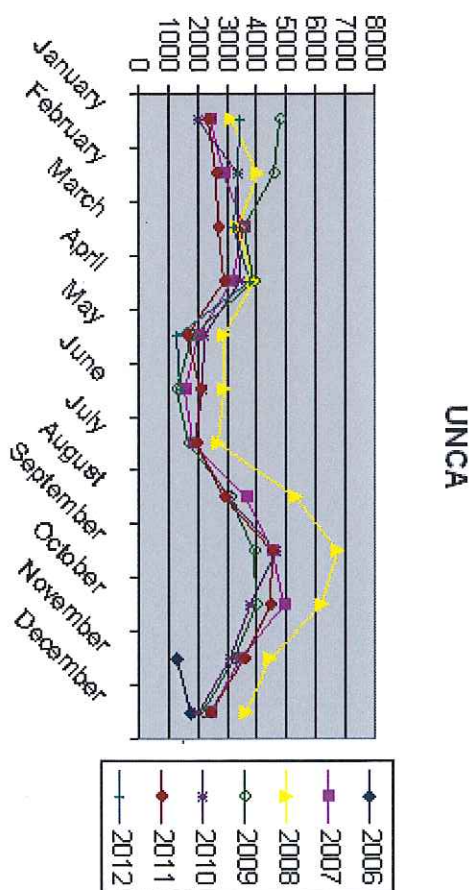
- Strategic Schedule draft of agenda
- Media Response Update
- Transit Commission Goals

Meeting Adjourned at 5:10 pm.

<i>Buncombe County</i>					
	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
January		231	127	221	230
February		236	222	238	213
March		204	275	329	254
April		366	264	311	207
May		302	189	430	359
June		319	259	294	181
July		301	208	313	
August		324	167	283	
September		334	203	236	
October	195	251	205	169	
November	209	199	184	211	
December	187	165	183	197	
Year Totals	591	3232	2486	3232	1444
Overall Totals	10985				

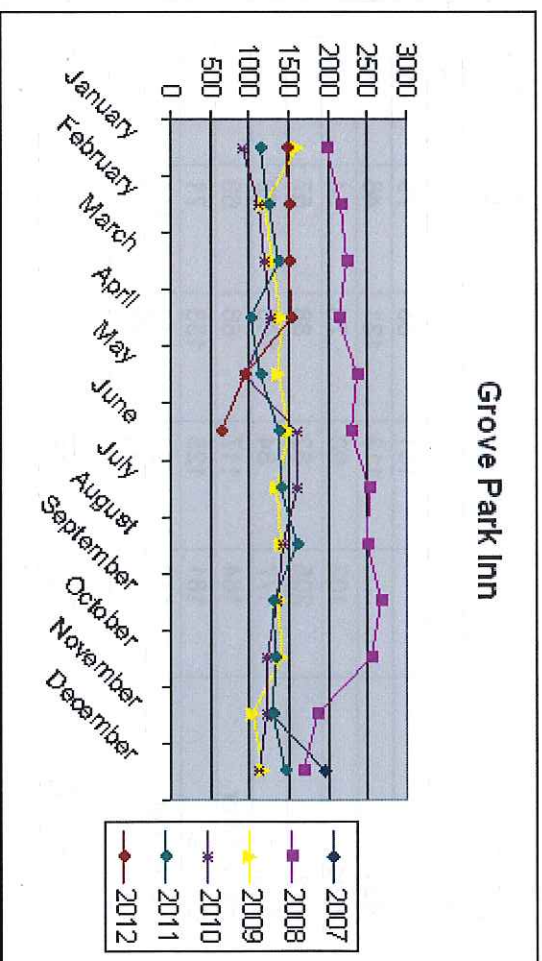


UNCA									
	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012		
January		2433	3140	4777	2020	2326	3398		
February		2860	4041	4562	3346	2652	3349		
March		3536	3346	3554	3335	2662	3245		
April		3163	3906	3891	3433	2888	3737		
May		2010	2870	1803	2248	1582	1301		
June		1529	2882	1253	2129	2055	1417		
July		1816	2692	1677	1890	1918			
August		3611	5336	3118	3013	2923			
September		4512	6755	3897	4663	4511			
October		4881	6169	3935	3774	4455			
November	1285	3452	4444	3234	3072	3572			
December	1754	2443	3649	2124	2042	2433			
Year Totals	3039	36246	49230	37825	34965	33977	16447		
Overall Totals	211729								

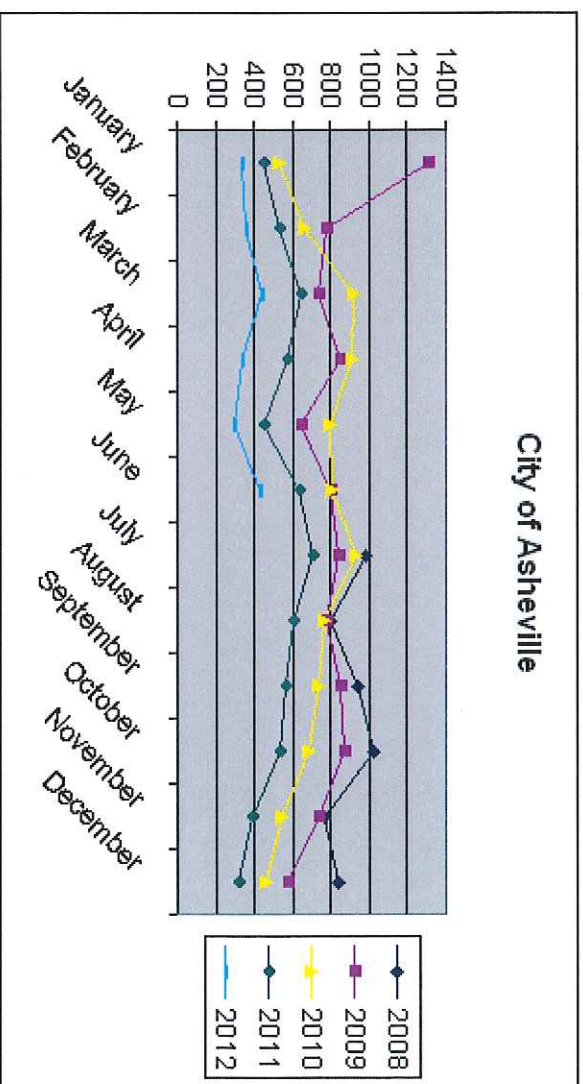


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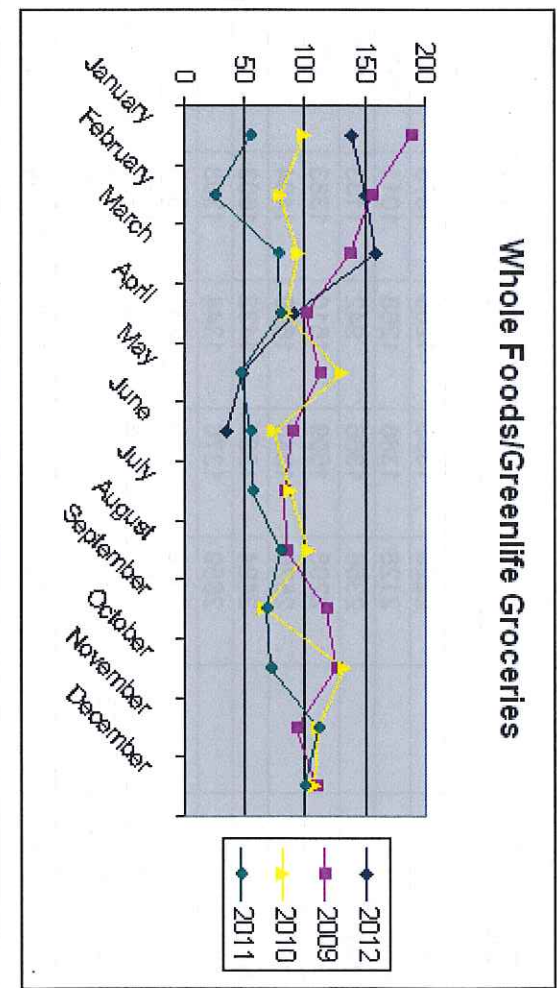
Grove Park Inn	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
January		1993	1592	913	1137	1487
February		2156	1198	1119	1238	1493
March		2225	1305	1205	1375	1503
April		2128	1386	1268	1011	1532
May		2356	1366	942	1133	933
June		2298	1509	1610	1383	623
July		2520	1345	1609	1404	
August		2494	1387	1432	1603	
September		2659	1376	1344	1303	
October		2552	1410	1231	1328	
November	1268	1863	1042	1217	1288	
December	1969	1676	1167	1112	1451	
Year Totals	3237	26920	16083	15002	15654	7571
Overall Totals	84467					



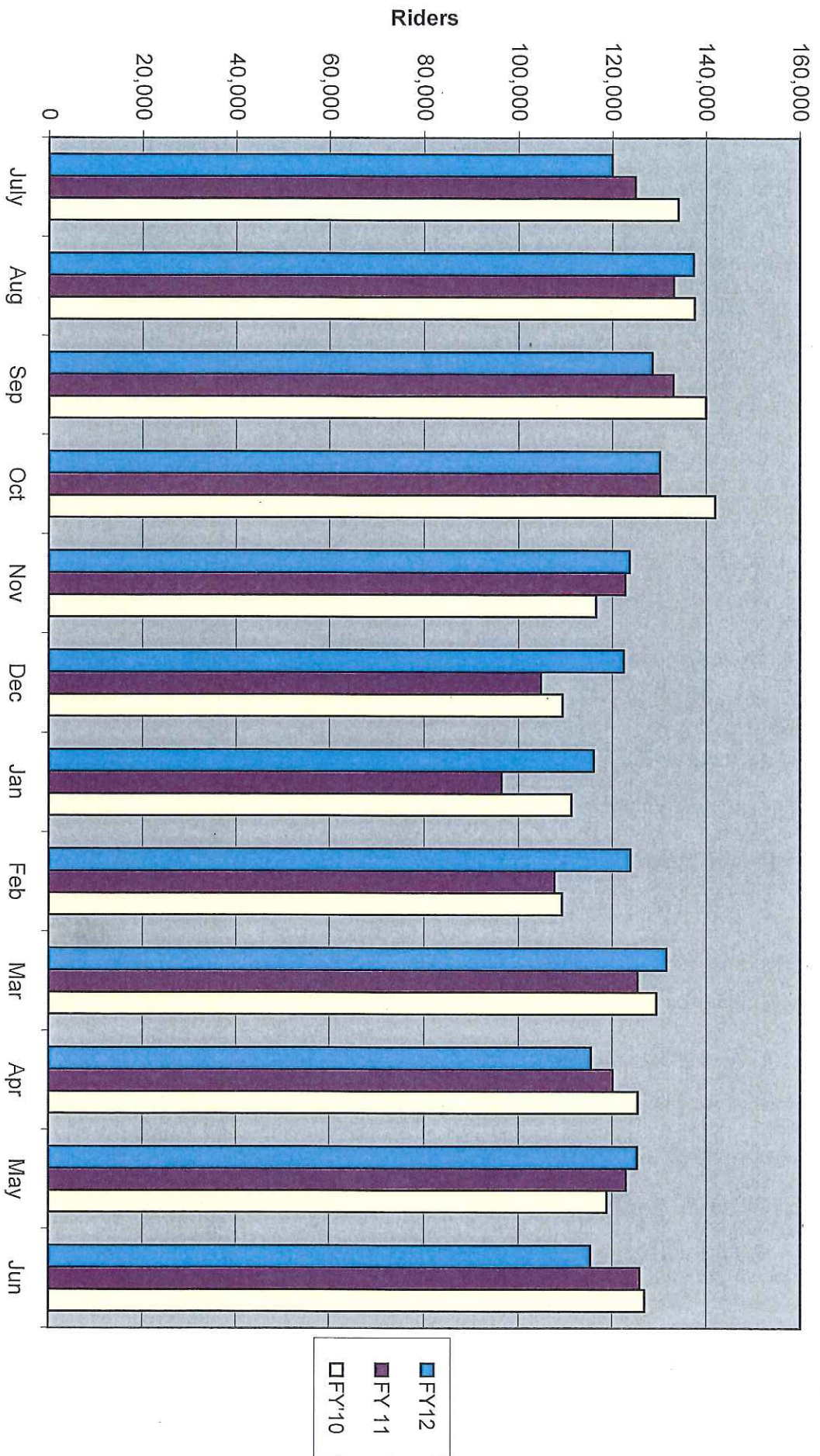
City of Asheville	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
January		1306	530	448	337
February		779	664	536	362
March		733	916	640	444
April		850	906	570	342
May		643	794	449	298
June		793	804	635	434
July	976	838	926	710	
August	797	774	767	604	
September	940	844	733	562	
October	1018	873	680	531	
November	770	735	545	392	
December	835	575	458	321	
Year Totals	5336	9743	8723	6398	2217
Overall Totals	32417				



Whole Foods/Greenlife	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
January		188	100	54	139
February		156	80	25	151
March		138	94	77	158
April		101	85	79	91
May		113	131	46	48
June	103	90	75	54	35
July	205	82	88	57	
August	177	84	103	79	
September	164	117	66	68	
October	181	125	133	71	
November	152	93	110	111	
December	185	109	107	99	
Year Totals	1167	1396	1172	820	
Overall Totals	4555				622



Ridership Comparison

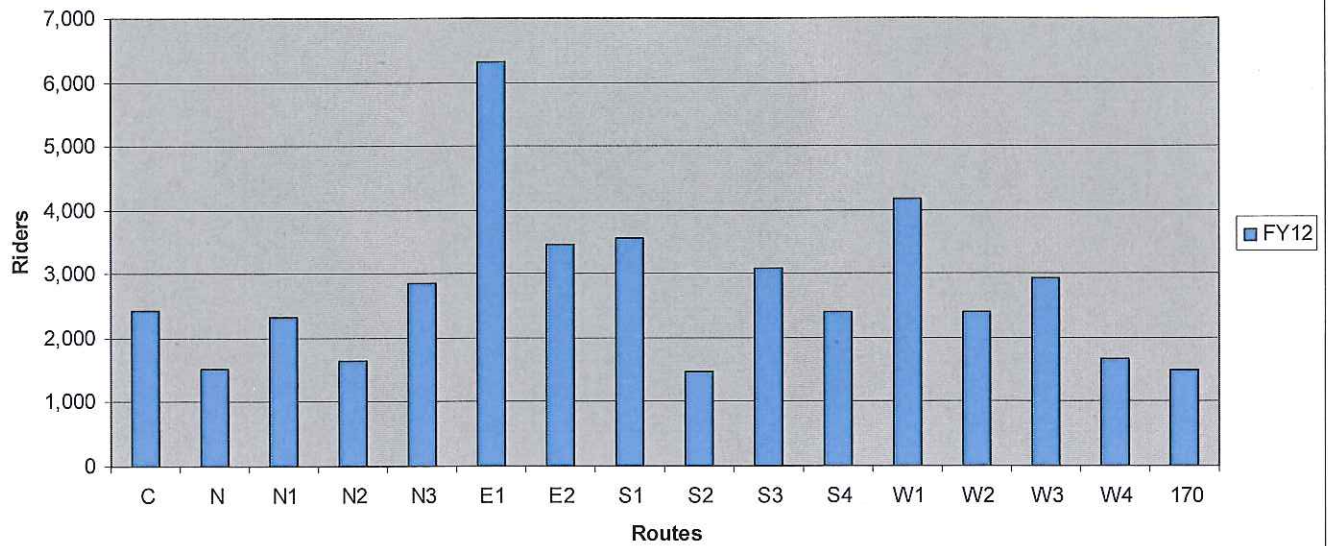


Current Month

JUNE,
2012

<u>Route</u>	<u>This Year</u>	<u>Last Year</u>	<u>Change</u>	<u>Delta</u>
1		12,283	(12,283)	-100%
2		10,381	(10,381)	-100%
4		8,367	(8,367)	-100%
5		2,048	(2,048)	-100%
6		6,886	(6,886)	-100%
8		6,402	(6,402)	-100%
9		6,807	(6,807)	-100%
11		10,132	(10,132)	-100%
12		8,005	(8,005)	-100%
13		8,981	(8,981)	-100%
15		9,417	(9,417)	-100%
16		5,116	(5,116)	-100%
18		9,541	(9,541)	-100%
26		9,592	(9,592)	-100%
36		729	(729)	-100%
38		710	(710)	-100%
41		2,164	(2,164)	-100%
46		855	(855)	-100%
51		1,104	(1,104)	-100%
52		570	(570)	-100%
170		5,724	(5,724)	-100%
TOTAL		125,814	10,435	-100%
C	7,177			
N	4,802			
N1	4,699			
N2	4,125			
N3	6,681			
E1	18,115			
E2	8,428			
S1	8,732			
S2	3,133			
S3	8,379			
S4	5,251			
W1	13,388			
W2	7,373			
W3	6,879			
W4	3,733			
170	4,484			
TOTAL	115,379	125,814	(10,435)	-0.0829

Riders Comparison May FY11-12



Route comparison June FY11

